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An  
Inaugural Dissertation  
upon  
Conversion of Diseases.

by  
Daniel Theodore Coxe - Pennsylv.  
admitted Feb. 7. 28th. 1822

On the  
Development of the  
Human Mind

by  
J. H. Green

London: George  
Parker, 1833

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## Conversion of Diseases.

1.

In this literary age, when the Cacoethes scribendi is universally prevalent, it is difficult in selecting a subject for an inaugural dissertation, to fix upon one which will either be attractive from its novelty, or likely to be satisfactorily elucidated by young men of little experience, and with the diffidence arising from the nature of the undertaking. If however they should meet with one in which much must depend on their own resources, and little expected from the views of others, who have gone before them, it behoves them to proceed cautiously, and at every step to look around, that they may not be lost in their pathless wanderings. With these impressions I proceed to the consideration of the subject of my choice, which tho' partially theoretical, will be powerfully assisted by facts, and whose foundation has been laid by Nature herself.

By Conversion we understand the appearance of new symptoms in the progress of a disease which require a different designation, and which either put a period to the original disorder, or combining with it alter our views of the prognosis, or the methods of cure. This is the letter of the law, but in the



course of our remarks we shall have frequent occasion to introduce particulars which in our opinion fall within the spirit, and which therefore we are justifiable in ranking under this head, bearing as they do so directly upon the leading principle. Such for example are the powerful counter impressions of any kind made upon the mind or body, which by their influence on the event of the disease are to be considered in the same light as new diseases.

The subject has been arranged in various ways, but they may all come under the two following, favorable & unfavorable convulsions — the former curing the original disorder, & leaving the patient in health; the latter by its violence carrying off the patient, or leaving him in a worse situation than before: a clear example of the first is Salt Fever curing Mania, and of the second, the conversion of Plumy into Typhus, which generally ends fatally, or of Hysteria into Mania or Palsy, a change from bad to worse.

It is now pretty generally admitted, because so well established by reasoning & fact, that "no two diseases can exist in the same part of the same body at the same time."

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This is a doctrine which the illustrious Hunter, and since his time others of celebrity have so ably elucidated, that it is wholly unnecessary at this time to do more than mention it. Considering it then as an admitted axiom, we will find that under this general head may be ranked several varieties or species, e.g. those diseases which are so despotie that they brook not a companion in the same system at the same time, it making no difference whether in the same or in a different part—for no sooner do they obtain possession of the system than they commence hostilities with any reigning maladies, and do not cease until they reign triumphant & alone, completely destroying the former occupants whether general or local. Some there are also which anticipate, and destroy the capability of the system to become affected with certain diseases. The cases which will be brought forward in the course of this enquiry will severally illustrate each of these points, bearing at the same time upon the general principle: and they differ, in that nature has effected it in some, & but in others; the latter often times intentionally, tho' often it is the consequence of means used, tho' not directed with that view.

Let us now enquire of what service this principle has

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been to the different maladies to which our frames are subject; & we will begin with that disease, which deprives man of his reason, the attribute which constitutes him lord of the creation, and the loss of which reduces him to a level with the brutes.

Of all the terrible trials which a humane & feeling physician in the exercise of his profession undergoes, none surely is so distressing as the sight of a fellow being in this situation. To be the means of rescuing him from this deplorable condition, and dispelling the cloud which hangs over his benighted mind he justly ranks among the proudest trophies of his art; and while exerting his utmost skill, frequently indeed in vain, Nature herself comes often armed to his assistance, and with another disease as her weapon, puts an end to the contest. Numerous are the cases upon record of cures effected in this way, and it is to be remarked, that in the earliest ages, when the operations of Nature first excited observation, this particular one was not overlooked. Who has not heard of that Fever curing Mania? Again & again has the fact been noticed in Spanish distemper, so soon as the Fall or Intermittent Season has set in, and so much confidence is reposed in the efficacy of this Malarialis, that Leeches are taken to these districts, and exposed to the

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There are a number of other small birds in the country, all numerous, but I cannot describe them. I saw a number of Red-bellied Woodpeckers, also some House Wrenlets, the smallest birds in the small colony, together with a few the latter.

There are also a number of small mammals, but I saw only one, sometimes observed to the south of the colony, but small.



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mental alienation. Here is a method nature pursued, which tho' effectual it would not be proper indiscriminately to imitate, as the risk of death would counterbalance the possibility of cure: but might not this objection be obviated in this manner? Having selected a patient upon whom we thought the remedy would operate kindly, let him be raised from a considerable height without any previous knowledge on his part of our intention; but in order to insure the safety of his life, let him be received upon a bed some distance from the ground: this mode idea however might be improved in many ways to suit the particular circumstances of each case. The *modus operandi* of such a remedy might most likely be found in the fright occasioned, & the strong impression it would certainly make upon any man. — — — In the same institution, several cases of Insanity were cured by inducing *Opisthoraea*.

Frost is another disease which illustrates the efficacy of this principle. Cullen in his treatise upon this general complaint takes particular notice of several cases, tho' he does not mention from whence he took them.





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1. The first part of the paper is devoted to the study of the asymptotic behavior of the solutions of the system (1) as  $t \rightarrow \infty$ . It is shown that the solutions of the system (1) tend to zero as  $t \rightarrow \infty$  if and only if the matrix  $A$  is stable.

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Ann. N. Y. Acad. Sci.

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*[Faint handwritten notes at the bottom of the page]*

Sept 12

San Jurella & Mallet also both relate cases of consumption  
 cured by the patient falling into streams of cold water - affording  
 examples of local & general action being suddenly changed  
 to general & local excitement in every part of the system.  
 And when a sea voyage cures this same fell destroyer of the  
 human race, upon what principle is it? A cholera is experi-  
 enced, a deathlike nausea pervades the entire frame, changing  
 the diseased action of the lungs to a healthy & excretory  
 condition, and thus by breaking down the morbid association  
 which exists, causes that healthy reaction to supervene which  
 in time restores the broken constitution. The foregoing ill-  
 ness case of medicinal convulsion mentioned by Dr Percival  
 occurs in a woman who was in the same state, but it will  
 not be amiss here. "A gentleman of rank in this Co. was in an  
 advanced state of what is called a consumptive consumption,  
 having an incessant cough, an expectoration abundantly puru-  
 lent, continued heat & night sweats. Yet his cure was accom-  
 plished by giving wine freely & by administering  
 doses of Haithorn & Opium. A gentle fit of the Yaws was  
 induced by this cordial regimen, the fever, cough & spitting  
 progressively abated, and the health of the patient was soon  
 'respectu' reestablished." Efforts of this kind are also

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occasionally made spontaneous at the close of phlebotomy complaints: but the patients are generally too completely reduced to derive much benefit from them, although the foot may in some considerable.

Whooping Cough is a disease perplexing in its management, & separately, not well understood by the most correct practitioners. From the frequent failure of attempts to arrest its course, physicians at present mostly content themselves with watching & assisting the efforts of nature without taking the management out of her hands. The majority of cases will, perhaps in this way terminate happily, for the disease in its nature is a beautiful & generally acts in the most judicious manner; but unfortunately it is not the case in every instance, as we see every day in haemorrhages, where if nature were not counteracted, the most unhappy consequences might result. We find also many instances of whooping cough where the disease is sedulously protracted & leaves round it some most unpleasant consequences; there on a long time disordered state concerning nature in the constitution. Now if the question be asked, whether this has any connection with our subject, we answer yes! & prove it by asserting







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most generally of *Sp. Ves.* that we might at first be led to believe a correct indication has no real effect, but these conclusions are only arrived at in consequence of the fact that the various circumstances their action is taken different, and that like a few other matters, I'm anxious to settle by force. Sometimes by their stimulus when the external surface, then some reaction in the relations of the systems at other times being more exuberant, and are often the most effective remedy for morbid absorption.

When occurring in a more acute form the blood numerous voluntaries of observing the changes for better or worse produced upon the patients by the treatment which presently arise in such an Institution, and the more we are convinced of the truth of that receipt which warns us of the danger arising from the too sudden removal of an established morbid affection: such are Rheum, Leucorrhoea, &c. &c. &c. the treatment in these occasions is generally unpalatable, embarrassing, important work.

There are some persons who believe in the curability of venereal diseases, and who upon the slightest warning of the









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As our "Nationality" has been prominent in our class  
these weeks, it may not be improper to make a few brief  
remarks on the subject. We would leave it rather to a  
man of letters to make a more extended notice of our  
countrymen, as we can say very few things that would  
not be obvious to every one. The subject is, however,  
not the least important in our country, and it is one of the  
most obliging duties, that we owe to the cause of  
truth. The issue is important, and it is one of the



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 thinking of  
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 and happy. I  
 am well and  
 hope to hear  
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 I am, dear  
 friend, ever  
 your affectionate  
 friend,  
 Wm. L. G.

grand pivot upon which the system wheels about from disease to health.

To conclude — This subject of convulsion is a boundless field; to cultivate which would require more time & labour than would be proper or necessary to employ upon the present occasion; but to any person qualified & willing to examine thoroughly the nature of the ground, it would afford an abundant harvest. Should he even be disappointed in his expectations as to the result, he would not deplore the time spent in the research: in his progress, almost every complaint to which the human body is subject would fall under his notice, and give him thus an insight into pathology not soon to be forgotten, and which might lay the foundation of new & splendid views. But instead of failing, let us suppose the contrary; that he succeeds in establishing a regular method of proceeding with chronic & at present incurable disorders — that the sum of human misery is daily lessened — and that thus his medicine shall shine still brighter in the constellation of the sciences: how will his heart abound at the cordial & exhilarated thanks of relieved human nature, and his soul expand, when he beholds his favourite

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pursuit honored, respected & blessed through those  
means, which as the Agent of the Society he has em-  
ployed.

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